

## nightlights by LesbianLatte

**Series:** [Six Different Ways Inside My Heart \(The Losers Club after the first Battle\) \[4\]](#)

**Category:** IT (1990), IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

**Genre:** Action & Romance, Action/Adventure, Alternate Universe - Everyone Lives/Nobody Dies, Alternate Universe - High School, Alternate Universe - Modern Setting, Bisexual Beverly Marsh, Canon Compliant, Canon Universe, Childhood Trauma, Eddie Kaspbrak & Beverly Marsh Are Best Friends, F/F, F/M, Fix It, Fix-It of Sorts, Fluff, Fluff and Angst, Gen, Horror, M/M, Multiverse, Nonbinary Ben Hanscom, Poly Beverly Marsh, Psychological Trauma, Some Humor, Stephen King Extended Universe (SKU), The Shining References, The Turtle (IT) CAN Help Us, Time Travel, Time Travel Fix-It, Trans Bill Denbrough, by god we gonna get these kids some therapy, here's how stan eddie georgie adrian all the kids & literally everyone can still be saved, ish, not really but hear me out - I'm gonna deal with the whole multiverse thing, part of a series but no you don't have to read the other parts to understand, this is like. horror & adventure but it's ME so there's still gonna be fluff because. again. it's ME

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Adrian Mellon, Alvin Marsh, Audra Phillips, Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Bill Denbrough's Parents, Don Hagarty, Eddie Kaspbrak, Georgie Denbrough, Henry Bowers, Kay McCall, Mike Hanlon, Myra Kaspbrak, Oscar "Butch" Bowers, Patricia Blum Uris, Richie Tozier, Richie Tozier's Parents, Ricky Lee, Sonia Kaspbrak, Stanley Uris, Will Hanlon

**Relationships:** Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Beverly Marsh & Georgie Denbrough, Beverly Marsh & Richie Tozier, Beverly Marsh/Kay McCall, Bill Denbrough & Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough & Georgie Denbrough, Bill Denbrough & Mike Hanlon, Bill Denbrough/Audra Phillips, Eddie Kaspbrak & Beverly Marsh, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier, Georgie Denbrough & The Losers Club, Mike Hanlon & Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon/St Stanley Uris, The Losers Club & Audra Phillips, The Losers Club & Kay McCall (IT), The Losers Club - Relationship

**Status:** In-Progress

**Published:** 2019-11-18

**Updated:** 2019-12-05

**Packaged:** 2019-12-17 16:39:15

**Rating:** Teen And Up Audiences

**Warnings:** No Archive Warnings Apply

**Chapters:** 7

**Words:** 15,436

**Publisher:** archiveofourown.org

**Summary:**

Sometimes, when Georgie got up to go to the bathroom or get a glass of water, he would hear Bill in his room crying and saying ‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I should have saved you sooner. I should’ve protected you.’ Georgie didn’t know if Bill was talking about him or Beverly, but he knew Bill was talking about the Deadlights and the events of That Summer. Bill didn’t need to know how much Georgie remembered, or how it was as if a fragment of light from the deadlights were still inside of him, making him dream things like the blood-filled bathtub.

“It was just a dream,” he said out loud to the empty, dark, room.

‘Wrong,’ said a cruel little voice. ‘The Deadlights show you things, Georgie, all kinds of things. You know for sure some of them are true.’

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The summer after fourth-grade, the Losers Club defeated Pennywise and rescued Beverly and Georgie from IT, but being trapped in the Deadlights didn't leave Beverly or Georgie untouched. Now they have strange and terrifying gifts. After a series of horrifying visions, the Losers Club must face the possibility that IT is still out there and they may have to fight a battle against fate in order to all survive.

# 1. yes georgie denbrough has the same night light as danny torrance what about it

## Author's Note:

thank you for reading <3

this is part of a series but it isn't necessary to read the other parts to understand this - though the other parts do provide character development/relationship development & will be referenced. for those keeping up with the series, this takes place directly after 'memorize these words.'

content warnings: literally all the content warnings that apply to canon, y'all. this IS a fix it, but I'm also gonna deal with the same horrible stuff canon deals with. child abuse, references to sexual abuse, homophobia, racism, violence, suicide, self harm

specific to this fic & less of a thing in canon: parental homophobia & parental transphobia

I will add chapter-specific content warnings as needed

Please leave a comment if you enjoy my writing, comments mean the world to me! If you wanna be buddies, hit me up on Tumblr @ juniper-hill-patient

Blood dripped from the man's hand onto the bathroom floor. He was staring at the ceiling with wide open eyes, his lips slightly parted. The bathtub water had turned red. The singular word, written in blood on the bathroom wall seemed to taunt Georgie Denbrough. 'It.'

It was not the first time Georgie had dreamed this and a hundred other horrible possible deaths for Stanley Uris. He knew it was Stanley, even though he looked a different. Taller, older. Like his dad, Donald, a little. Georgie had dreamed of all the losers club members' deaths. He'd memorized the many ways the seven of them died.

Sometimes it was the clown. Other times it was a car crash. A trip down a flight of stairs. Choking. Certain deaths seemed to shine brighter than others in Georgie's mind and he knew, without knowing how he knew, that these were the most likely events.

He'd dreamed of Stanley, dead in the bathtub more maybe than anything else.

The nightmares didn't come every night. Sometimes they came once a week. Sometimes months would pass and there would be none and Georgie would start to feel safer going to sleep. Then, without fail, the violent dreams would be back, bloody and cruel.

'Poor Stanley,' he thought. Georgie was not a physical being in the dream. He had to exist, like vapor and air. Georgie Denbrough did not know the word 'corporeal.' If He had, he'd know that his state in these dreams – dreams in the Deadlights – was noncorporeal. Instead, he thought of himself as a ghost in the dreams. A ghost, a fly on the wall, observing but unable to interact with what he saw.

Georgie thought of Stanley almost like a brother so seeing him like this was almost like a physical pain, as if his heart – though it did not exist in this state because he was (a ghost) vapor and air - was literally breaking apart. Afterall, Stanley had helped save him That Summer. Georgie always thought of it that way, in capital letters, That Summer. Stanley and Billy and Eddie and Richie and Ben and Mike had saved him and Beverly.

Patricia Uris opened the bathroom door and Georgie wished he could close his eyes or look away from her expression, which was almost as horrible as Stanley's dead body. He couldn't. He couldn't scream, or cry or close his eyes. All he could do was watch. Patricia dropped the beer can. 'Now she'll scream,' Georgie thought. Indeed, Patricia Uris started screaming a few seconds later.

Georgie woke up covered in sweat and with tears streaming from his eyes.

He thought, not for the first time, of telling Bill about the dream. 'They're just dreams,' he told himself. 'Bill doesn't need to know.' Bill already had enough to worry about. Sometimes, when Georgie got up to go to the bathroom or get a glass of water, he would hear Bill in

his room crying and saying 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I should have saved you sooner. I should've protected you.' He didn't know if Bill was talking about himself or Beverly, but he knew Bill was talking about the deadlights, and the events of That Summer. Bill didn't need to know how much Georgie remembered, or how it was as if a fragment of light from the deadlights was still inside of him.

"It was just a dream," he said out loud to the empty, dark room.

He got up and walked across the room to where a Snoopy nightlight Bill had gotten him, at his request, was plugged in but not lit. 'I know I told Mommy to light that before she left the room and she lit it, I saw her turn it on, she lit it -' a panicky voice in his head thought. Georgie ignored it, cut it off because it was silly. Mommy must have come back in and turned it off when he was asleep. He clicked the switch. Snoopy lit up. He walked back to his bed even though he wanted to run, he wanted to run and pull the covers over himself but he was a big kid now. Only babies did things like run across the room to hide under the covers and he was a big boy and he knew what was real and what wasn't. Still, some of the tension lifted from him when he was in bed, wrapped in the covers - safe. 'Safe from what?' he asked himself. He didn't know. He didn't want to think too hard about it.

"It wasn't real," he said to the empty room, trying to sound firm.

'Wrong,' said a cruel little voice. 'The deadlights show you things, Georgie, all kinds of things. You know for sure some of them are true.'

Georgie hugged himself. 'Yeah,' he thought in defiance. 'So?' So what if some of it was true? Not all of it.

Besides, some of it was good. Not all the dreams felt the same. Some of them didn't feel evil at all. 'The turtle,' he thought. 'The turtle sometimes helps.' But he didn't know what that meant, so he brushed it off.

Like, he'd dreamed that Bill was a boy before Bill had ever explained it to him. Bill had tried to tell Georgie about being 'transgender' and Georgie hadn't understood all of it, but he'd understood that Bill was

his brother.

‘It’s ok, Billy,’ he’d said. ‘The turtle told me.’ He hadn’t known what he meant by that, but he knew it was true.

‘I didn’t even tell you my n-name,’ Bill had said, confused. ‘How did you kn-know?’

‘Is Billy not right?’ Georgie had asked, worried.

‘No,’ Bill said. ‘That’s right, Georgie.’ But he’d had an odd expression that Georgie hadn’t understood.

He’d dreamed of finding the dog with the broken leg hiding in the bushes by the street and Ben Hanscom adopting it and that had come true. That had been good, and Georgie was glad he’d known to look for the dog. He’d dreamed of Richie Tozier talking in a silly voice and kissing Eddie Kaspbrak on the kissing bridge and later Billy had mentioned that Richie and Eddie were in love. That was good too though.

‘Not all of it is good, stop lying to yourself,’ said the cruel voice that didn’t want him to be comforted.

He’d once dreamed of Sonja Kaspbrak crushing something up and sprinkling it into Eddie’s water and the next day Eddie had called to tell Bill he couldn’t play, and Georgie had insisted to Bill that the two of them go over there. When they had, Eddie had been strange and quiet and not himself. Georgie had asked Bill what was wrong as the two of them walked home but Bill just shook his head.

Georgie had been eight at the time and he hadn’t understood. He was just ten years old now, and he understood a little more. He didn’t want to think about this. He didn’t want to think about the deadlights. ‘Think about My Little Pony,’ he told himself. ‘Or SpongeBob SquarePants, or anything else.’ He looked over at the lit up Snoopy light and he felt a little better.

He closed his eyes to go back to sleep.

At around one o’ clock in the morning Zack and Sharon Denbrough awoke to hear their youngest child sobbing and calling for ‘Billy.’

Bill Denbrough had snuck out hours ago. Zack and Sharon had both heard him leaving and said nothing.

## 2. gazebos

### Summary for the Chapter:

serious content warning for parental homophobia & discussion of Munchhausen by proxy

“What’s wrong?” Beverly asked.

“Nothing,” Eddie said, putting his phone face down and pretending he hadn’t been staring at it.

Richie closed the laptop and he and Bev stared at Eddie from either side. They were sitting in Richie’s bed and had been watching an episode of BuzzFeed Unsolved while cuddled up under the blankets and leaning against the wall.

“You’ve been staring at your phone like you’re waiting for someone to text or call literally this whole time,” Richie said. “Don’t tell me we’ve barely been together an entire weekend and you’ve got a side bitch already.”

It was clearly a joke, and Eddie should’ve laughed. Instead, to his horror, a sob came out. Immediately Bev and Richie were both hugging him from either side.

“I was just kidding, hey, it’s ok!” Richie said, sounding alarmed. ‘If only you realized,’ Eddie thought. ‘My mom’s my side bitch and always will be. God, I don’t think I’ll ever get her voice in my head to shut up.’

“Eddie, what’s going on?” Bev asked.

Eddie managed to take a long, deep breath. He wanted to reach for the aspirator, but he didn’t. Instead, he took a few more deep breaths and then closed his eyes.

“Remember when I told you Friday that my mom was being weird on the phone, Richie?”

It was now Sunday. Eddie hadn’t been home since. He’d spent the



night at Mike's Friday and Ben's Saturday and now he was at Richie and Bev's place.

Bev still needed to go back to Alvin Marsh's apartment and collect her stuff, so she was wearing Richie's clothes and hanging out in the bed with Richie and Eddie while she waited for Went Tozier to text her and let her know Alvin was at work.

"Yeah," Richie said. He and Bev were both still hugging Eddie, and that made it a little easier to go on.

"She hasn't texted or called me since." He knew how stupid that sounded, and he hoped to goodness that Richie and Bev understood. If anyone else's mom didn't text for a weekend, it probably meant nothing other than that it was a busy weekend. Eddie's mom not texting for even day meant something was very wrong. She should've been in full panic mode, begging Eddie to come home.

"What do you think it could be?" Bev asked.

"I don't know," Eddie said. "Normally by now she'd have texted me like a million times."

"Let's go over there," Richie said, abruptly. This was not the response Eddie had expected or wanted.

"I'm sorry, what?" Beverly asked. She sounded almost angry.

"Look," Richie said. "I don't think you should go home alone if something is wrong."

Richie jumped off the bed and started putting on his shoes. Bev and Eddie exchanged a look.

"Richie, I'm not sure that's a good idea," Beverly said in a careful voice. "What if us barging in just makes her more upset?"

"Then you and me kidnap Eddie," Richie said. "I think we could take Sonja. I mean, not if she tried to sit on us, but I bet the three of us could outrun her no problem."

"Yeah but then I'd still have to go back there," Eddie said. He loved

Richie, but Richie did not always think things through. "I live there, remember asshole?"

"No, you wouldn't," Richie said. "Come live with me and Bev."

"Yeah, I'm not sure how your parents would feel about your boyfriend moving in," Eddie said.

"They didn't even hesitate when I asked about Bev."

"That's different, you didn't just announce that you and Bev are dating."

"We'll sneak you in. They'll literally never know."

"You're literally insane," Eddie said.

"Yeah," Beverly said. "As sweet as you're trying to be here, Richie, I don't know about us going over there with Eddie. I really think it might make things worse, and we don't want that."

"I refuse to let the love of my life walk into that house alone. Sonja is a psychotic abusive bitch on a good day. If something is extra wrong, Eds isn't facing it alone."

"I mean I think I should get a say in that," Eddie said. In his head, Richie's words kept repeating themselves. He wanted to hold his ears, but that would be insane. Instead, he stuck the aspirator between his teeth and pumped.

'psychotic abusive bitch. abusive. bitch. psychotic abusive bitch.'

Richie and Bev knew about the medications, some real some sugar pills. They knew about the repeated trips to the emergency room when nothing was wrong, about the aspirator he didn't need. The other losers didn't know everything, but they knew enough to give Eddie sympathetic looks when they thought he couldn't see and to keep their mouths shut and listen with sympathy when he talked about his mom. Still, no one, and certainly not Eddie, had ever used the word 'abusive.'

"Nope," Richie said. "Accept this as me being protective and

annoying if you want, but I'm going."

Eddie was starting to get a little annoyed. He called Richie annoying eighty times a day without meaning it, but just now he found the tension already building inside him growing and building into irritation.

His anxiety sometimes came out in anger, and he knew it and he was trying to control it because Richie loved him and (when people love you, they want to protect you) and just cared a lot. He knew Richie was trying to be sweet and protective and show that he cared, but protective to Eddie sometimes felt like a prison. He'd lived his whole life with a woman who showed her love by being protective. Richie now had his shoes on, and he was standing and waiting for Bev and Eddie to get up.

Bev was watching Eddie's face and he had a feeling she got it. She had always gotten it in a way no one else did when it came to Eddie's dangerously co-dependent relationship with his mom. 'Abusive,' corrected the voice in his head that was cruelly honest when it came to his relationship with his mother. 'Co-dependent isn't right. It's abusive. Richie says it. Bev knows it. It's time to wrap your stupid head around it.'

'I'm not some victim,' he argued internally with the voice. 'I'm not abused, and I don't need to be protected. I just have a complicated relationship with my mom.' Ha! As if 'complicated' could begin to cover it. His lungs felt tight. He didn't want to be thinking the way he was, but he couldn't help the racing thoughts. Did Richie think he couldn't handle his mom? He'd handled her all his life and he'd faced worse than her and walked away stronger for it. He didn't need to be protected.

He wiped away some of his tears. 'Fuck it,' he thought, and used the aspirator, hating himself for the relief and ease of breathing that came with it.

"Ok," he said. "Richie, I get that you're trying to be sweet, but I'm asking you to quit. I don't need you to be protective."

"I didn't even mean it like that, Eds," Richie said. The hurt in his

voice was clear and Eddie hated himself for being the cause of that. "I know you don't need it. I just hate thinking about you going in there alone."

"I know that. And don't call me Eds," Eddie said, wiping his eyes again. The gentle correction about the nickname made Richie smile and Eddie felt fractionally better. "I'm just saying, I can handle my mom, ok?"

Richie was staring at Eddie with wide eyes. He looked dumbfounded. "You're such an idiot," he said.

"Gee thanks," Eddie said. "Just what I needed to hear."

"I just mean, you have to realize I know you CAN handle her," Richie said. He put a huge emphasis on the word 'can.' "Because I know you CAN handle anything. I just don't want you to have to do it alone, and I know because I've known you since we were four, that you're naturally inclined to try to do everything alone because you CAN."

It was Eddie's turn to be dumbfounded. This thought process hadn't occurred to him. He smiled a little even though he was still very worried about going home. "Ok," he said. "Thanks, Richie. I still think I'm capable of walking into my own home alone, but thanks." He kept his voice casual, but the tension was running through him like electricity.

The little voice in his head that spoke in a voice that sounded too close to his mother's voice for comfort was reminding him that he wasn't capable of anything because he was weak and worthless. It had been a while since that voice had been able to hold much power over Eddie, and he ignored it.

"I'd never say you were incapable," Richie said. "You're like, the bravest person I know."

"Alright, overkill, but again, thanks," Eddie said.

"No, I mean it," Richie said. "Braver than me by far. I'm just trying to keep up."

"Whatever," Eddie said.

"If Pennywise ever comes back, I'm hiding behind you, babe."

"Yet you don't want me to talk to my own mother alone," Eddie retorted, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

"Different beasts," Richie said with a shrug.

For some reason, Beverly had tensed up beside Eddie. He turned to her and saw that she looked incredibly pale.

"What's wrong?" he asked her.

"Nothing," she said in barely a whisper.

"Whoa, it's something," Richie said, looking at Beverly with huge eyes. He finally sat back down on the edge of the bed. "What is it, Bev?"

"It's just...if Pennywise ever comes back, promise that was a joke," Beverly said.

"Dude, chill, of course it was a joke," Richie said, alarmed. "Pennywise isn't coming back anyway, right? We killed that bitch."

Eddie felt cold. It was like someone had dropped an ice cube down the back of his shirt. What had been hot panic was turning to cool dread. Beverly was shaking. "Yeah," she said.

"What is it, Beverly?" Eddie asked, not wanting to know.

"I don't want to freak you guys out," Beverly said.

"Well too late," Eddie said. "I'm sufficiently freaked."

"Same here," Richie said. He sounded scared and Eddie reached over and took his hand, squeezing.

Beverly took a deep breath. "I have these dreams," she said. "I tell myself they're just dreams."

"Not a reassuring start," Eddie noted.

"I've dreamed all our deaths." Beverly spoke in voice so quiet Eddie

could've denied hearing her, and he was tempted to do just that. She wouldn't look at Eddie or Richie.

There was a loaded moment of silence. "I'm sorry, what?" Richie asked. "Our deaths?"

"Yeah I'm gonna need more elaboration," Eddie said. "What does that mean?"

"The seven of us. Ever since that summer, I've dreamed all our deaths, again and again. Different ways. Always when we're adults. Our parents' age. And what you just said, Richie," Beverly was tearing up now. "That was one of the ways."

"What, that I hid behind Eddie and Pennywise?"

"Not exactly," Beverly said. Eddie felt his heart rate accelerating. He wanted to tell her to shut up, to just shut up and not tell them anymore. He didn't want to think about this.

He didn't want to hear this. He wanted to run home and ask his mom if everything was alright and have her say yes, that she'd been so worried about him, and then she'd hug him and make some tea and bring him a Xanax and he'd take it instead of spitting it out when she wasn't looking as he always (almost always) did now.

Instead, he asked, "What happened in the dream, Bev?"

Beverly buried her face in her knees, and Eddie wrapped an arm around her back and squeezed. She leaned into him and spoke in a muffled voice, "You died, Eddie," she said. Eddie hitched in a breath. He could feel Richie's eyes on him, but he didn't look away from Beverly. He didn't think he could. His arm dropped from around her back, limp.

"How?" he managed.

"Richie," she said. "You were caught in the Deadlights. And Eddie, I'd given you this metal spike. I told you it killed monsters," she sobbed. Eddie's heart felt like it was about to burst from his chest. "You ran towards Pennywise, and you threw the spike at him. You thought you'd killed him, and Richie came out of the Deadlights and for a

minute it seemed like everything was alright-” Beverly, it seemed, couldn’t go on. She started sobbing. “I’m sorry,” she said. “It was just a dream. I’m being really stupid, I know. It’s just when you said that, Richie, it was like I got this horrible feeling that the nightmare would come true.”

“It won’t,” Richie said. He was speaking in a soft but dead serious voice. “I won’t let it.”

“How will you stop it?” Bev asked.

“I know about the dream now, don’t I? I won’t let us be put in that position.”

Beverly looked up from her knees. “Promise?” she asked.

“Of course,” Richie said. He and Beverly were both staring at Eddie now.

“I’m going home,” Eddie announced. He felt sick to his stomach. He didn’t want Beverly and Richie looking at him the way they were.

“Let us-” Richie started.

“No,” Eddie snapped. “I told you, I’m capable of walking into my own home alone. I’ll see you guys.”

He marched out of the room. He could hear footsteps coming after him, but he didn’t look back. How had he let the day go so terribly wrong before noon even hit? It had been such a happy weekend. Richie’s parents had been happy about them being together, Beverly had been told she was moving in with Richi. They’d been sitting and watching Buzzfeed Unsolved, having a nice morning. Why had he had to ruin everything?

He hurried out the front door and before the door shut, Richie came running out after him.

“Wait,” he said.

“If you really think I’m so capable, you should let me-”

"No, I just wanted to say, you know, good luck talking to her," Richie said. "Call me and let me know what's going on, ok?"

Eddie sighed. "Of course," he said. "I'm sorry I ruined-"

"Hey," Richie said. "You didn't ruin anything, ok? I was being pushy. It's my bad."

They were standing on the porch, and Eddie wanted to go back inside and watch BuzzFeed Unsolved. Richie was still looking at him like he was a cancer patient though. Or maybe he was imagining it. Maybe he felt like that. How long had Beverly been keeping these dreams from them? Were they really just dreams?

'She was in the Deadlights,' a cruel voice whispered in Eddie's mind. 'Of course they aren't just dreams.'

"Richie, do you think Beverly's dreams-"

"I don't know," Richie said before Eddie could finish the question.

"Ok," Eddie said. He pumped the aspirator into his lungs, and it was a little easier to breathe.

"It'll be ok," Richie said, but he didn't sound like he believed it. Or maybe that was more of Eddie's imagination. Richie kissed Eddie on the cheek. "Want me to walk you home?"

"Nah," Eddie said, because he needed a minute to breathe, a minute to process what Beverly had described without Richie giving him worried looks. "You and Bev finish the episode. I'll call you. And if I'm not in trouble or something, I'll come back over in a bit. I'll go over to Mr. Marsh's apartment with you guys if your dad texts."

"Ok," Richie said.

The walk home seemed to take forever. Eddie regretted telling Richie to let him walk home alone almost as soon as he was a block away. He wanted Richie to tease him and distract him from his worried thoughts with stupid dirty jokes and bad impressions of celebrities. Eddie reached into his fanny pack and pulled out the aspirator a couple of times before deciding just to keep the stupid thing in his



hands.

‘You died, Eddie.’

Richie had said he wouldn’t let that happen, but Beverly was right. How would he stop it? How was Richie supposed to avoid getting caught in the Deadlights? And if Richie did get caught, what was Eddie supposed to do, just not save him? That wasn’t even an option. Not even worth considering.

A tiny, crude, voice whispered, ‘you could run. you and richie, hell, even all seven of you. you could run away from this town and never look back.’

“No,” Eddie said out loud, fully aware that he would look insane if anyone happened to see him, walking along and talking to himself. “We made a promise.”

“Eh?” Eddie looked over to see Mr. Sheldon sitting on his porch and smoking a cigarette.

“Nothing,” Eddie said.

Mr. Sheldon shrugged but gave Eddie an appraising look as he hurried forward. His own house was just a few houses further. When he got there, he took a final pump on the aspirator before zipping it away in the fanny pack.

He walked up the porch stairs, and each step felt like a mountain he was climbing.

He opened the front door and went in.

Sonja Kaspbrak was sitting in the living room like she was waiting. A soap opera was on in the background, but instead of looking at the TV, she was staring at the door. Eddie closed it behind him.

“Hi, Ma,” he said.

She turned off the TV. “Eddie,” she said. She gestured to him and he made his way over. She patted the sofa beside her. He sat, obediently.

“What is it, Ma?” he asked.

“Please explain why Sally Mueller’s mom sent me this,” she pulled out her phone and opened it to Instagram. She clicked the ‘messages’ section. He hadn’t even known she had an Instagram. Maybe she had just downloaded it for this, just to look at whatever Mrs. Mueller had been gossiping about.

She handed the phone to him. Eddie’s hand was shaking. He took the phone and looked at the messages. It was a link to his own most recent post. The picture of the place on the kissing bridge where Richie had carved their initials. ‘NO,’ Eddie thought wildly. ‘She can’t take that away from me. Not that.’

“Eddie,” Sonja said. “Tell me it isn’t true.”

He handed back the phone and looked at her. The disgust and anger on her face made him feel almost as sick as hearing about Beverly’s dream. He wished he’d never come home. He wished he was still at Richie’s watching BuzzFeed Unsolved and not giving a shit that his mom hadn’t texted him because she was a psychotic abusive bitch and –

And the truth was he did care, he cared a lot because she was his mom damn it and he loved her, and his heart was breaking.

“Mommy-”

“Tell me you’re not some, some queer, Eddie!”

“Mom!” he yelled, standing up. “It’s true.”

She stood up as well and towered over him. “Eddie, you’re sick and you need help, you need-”

“I need you to try to understand,” Eddie said. He hated that his voice broke. “Can’t you even do that? I try so hard to make you happy and you just-”

“You try to make me happy?” Sonja asked. “By disappearing at all hours of the day and night? By hanging around those – those – losers you call your friends? By breaking your arm and never even telling

me how? By sneaking around doing things with some boy? I get so worried, Eddie. I just want to protect you.” The desperation in his voice made him sick with guilt but he knew, he knew she was wrong. She loved him and she meant it when she said she worried, that much he was sure of, but he was also sure that she was wrong in the way she was showing it.

“By giving me fake pills?” Eddie asked, standing. He felt the adrenaline coursing through him along with the fear and guilt and sadness.

“I don’t, Eddie, you’re very sick and you need medicine-”

“Medicine?” Eddie laughed. He couldn’t believe it, and apparently neither could his mom. Nothing had ever been less funny but at the same time, it was kind of hilarious. They had never spoken aloud the thing about the pills, the ‘medicine,’ not since That Summer when he’d screamed that they were ‘gazebo’s. The thought of that, his eleven-year-old self calling them ‘gazebo’s because he knew they were bullshit but he didn’t know the word ‘placebo’ made him laugh again.

“You think this is funny?” she asked. She let out a sob. Eddie had expected this, it still made his heart sink.

Tears were Sonja Kaspbrak’s greatest weapon against him. Because he could fight back when she was screaming, and he could avoid her when she was sullen, but he was helpless when she cried, and she knew it.

“Ma,” he said. “Please don’t.” He recognized desperation in his voice and he was disgusted by it. He was disgusted by the way he fell to her whim when she cried, the way it was so easy for her to manipulate his emotions even though he knew what she was doing.

“What am I supposed to do?” she cried, sinking onto the sofa.

“Mommy, I know I don’t need the medicine.”

He sat down beside her. He couldn’t help it. Her sobs were like siren calls, pulling him to her, making his resolve soften. ‘She loves me,’ he

thought. 'She doesn't know how to show it, and she's just so scared and if I can understand any of it, I can understand that.' Oh yes, he could understand being afraid. That was something he understood all too well.

"You do," she sobbed. "Eddie, you could die. You're so sick. I can't lose you."

"Mom," Eddie said. It was a small thing, but he felt a little braver when he called her 'mom' instead of 'ma' or 'mommy,' as she preferred to be called. "I haven't taken my pills in years."

"What?" she looked at him and he recognized the raw fear in her tiny, tearful eyes. "What do you mean, Eddie?"

"I've been faking it," he said. "I spit the pills out. I should've told you. But I know I don't need medicine, because I haven't been taking it and I'm fine. Don't you get it? I'm not sick. Mom, I think you're the one who's sick and I think you need help. Maybe-"

She stood up again and Eddie stopped talking. She was breathing hard. "Go to your room, now," she said. "You do not speak to me like that."

"I'm not going to my room."

"Eddie, you go now!"

Eddie stood up. "You need help, Mom," Eddie said. "Serious help. And if you really care about me, you'll get it. I'm leaving now though." He was amazed at how steady his voice sounded. 'Is that really me talking?' he wondered.

He was even more amazed when he stood up and walked out the door. He could hear her sobbing and screaming for him as he walked away, but it was as if she were a voice on the radio instead of the real thing.

The panic attack didn't start until he was about a block away and he sat down on a bench and started shaking.

### 3. hearing voices

#### Summary for the Chapter:

chapter specific content warning for car related  
physical harm

Ben and Kay each held one of Beverly's hands and Richie gave her an apprehensive nod. She could tell Richie was still distracted, worrying about Eddie. She'd told him she'd understand if he didn't want to come. She had Ben and Kay and Maggie Tozier was sitting in the running car, ready to drive. Richie had insisted though. He was as stubborn as he was predictable, and she loved him for it. He was the brother she'd never had, or known she wanted. She was worried about Eddie too, but she had to focus on getting this over with or she'd go insane.

Went Tozier had texted her to let her know Alvin Marsh had pulled up to Derry Elementary where he did weekend janitorial work, and he wasn't taking his eyes off Alvin's parked car until Beverly was home safe. She'd felt something warm deep inside when Went referred to the Tozier residence as 'home' to her in the text.

"Ready?" Ben asked her in a soft voice.

She gave a curt nod and marched to the front door of the apartment. She plugged in the familiar combination. Two, one, seven. There was a clicking sound, and Beverly let go of the hands holding hers, so she could use both arms to shove the door open. She walked up the stairs ahead of the group, her jaw set.

She was walking into her childhood home for what she hoped was the last time. She walked in a certain, set fashion. Each step was purposeful. The group headed down the hall when they got to her floor, following her until they reached the door labeled 'Marsh.' Beverly found the key where she expected it, under the matt. She put it in the lock. She turned it.

The four of them walked into the apartment and stood for a moment in the living room. It was tidy but dusty. Beverly did the dusting,

vacuuming, and mopping and it was evident that it had not been done in her absence. There was a can of coca-cola sitting on the TV stand, but other than that nothing was out of place. Alvin Marsh was not a drinking man, and Beverly knew he would be living off PB&Js and TV dinners without her there to cook, so the place was not covered in dirty dishes or empty beer bottles.

It felt off to her. Almost like no one was living there at all. 'What will he do without me?' she almost said. She didn't though. The others would be sure to overwhelm her with remarks about how he didn't deserve her, or how that wasn't her concern. She knew all that. Yet, she could know all that and still worry.

'I worry about you Bevvie. I worry a lot.' Those words echoed in her mind, insidious, cruel, unshakable. 'And I worry about you, Daddy,' she thought. Then she thought 'oh, what a fun, codependent relationship we have.' 'Not anymore,' she reminded herself sternly. She shuddered. Ben shot her a worried look and she just shook her head.

She walked past the bathroom and toward her bedroom. "Good memories," she remarked to Ben as they passed the bathroom.

Ben let out a dull, humorless chuckle. Good memories indeed. Memories of dark clotted blood from deep beneath the town of Derry. Memories of the voices of dead children.

Beverly, Ben, Eddie, and Stan had scrubbed away at the blood that had sprayed from the sink, the blood that only children could see. Ben, Eddie, and Stan had helped her clean away that mess, at Stan's suggestion. Looking back, that had been an important day in more ways than one. It had been a bonding exercise, for better or for worse, bringing together the members of the Losers Club, tying them together into a nightmare. More than that, it had been the day that Beverly accepted that there were things in the world, things in Derry, that shouldn't exist.

She arrived in front of her bedroom and tried not to think about the blood in the bathroom anymore. She had to focus. She had to get her things. She stood in the doorway for a few moments contemplating the idea of never sleeping in this room again. When was the last time

she'd slept in her own bed? A month ago? Two months? At some point, she'd spent a last night in her childhood bed and not even known it. How anticlimactic. It was almost funny.

Beverly let out a small, shrill chuckle.

"I'm all for making light of dark shit, but uh, you all good, Bev?" Richie asked in a voice that was higher than his normal voice.

Richie had always been empathetic while lacking emotional intelligence. Beverly knew this because he was like a brother to her. He was teasing her to make her feel less small, a little less like some poor helpless little girl they were all there to protect and a little more like someone the others could make fun of. It was what he'd been doing when he teased Eddie earlier in the morning, saying he'd use Eddie as a shield against Pennywise if Pennywise ever came back.

As she thought of this, Beverly felt a sudden pain in her temple, like a migraine but instead of coming on slow like a migraine it hit her all at once and her hands flew to the sides of her head.

Sometimes she dreamed things.

And sometimes, they came true.

It had been happening to her since That Summer. But she didn't want to think about that now, she had to focus on getting her stuff and getting the hell out of this place and –

'Beverly?'

"What?" she asked, looking around. Who had spoken? The others were looking at her with wide, scared eyes.

"Just asking if you're ok-" Richie started, still trying to sound like he was teasing.

"Shut up!" she interrupted him. She hadn't meant to snap, but she'd heard someone else speaking at the same moment as Richie in a small, scared voice that was somehow familiar.

'Beverly, can you hear me?'

No way. She was going crazy. She was losing it. She had to be. Because there was no way – “Georgie?” she asked out loud.

Richie, Ben, and Kay exchanged looks. Beverly looked around wildly as if Bill Denbrough’s ten-year-old baby brother could possibly be in her apartment. It didn’t make sense and yet –

‘Yeah, it’s me,’ Georgie said. Except he was saying it inside her head.

‘Oh god, I’m really losing it,’ Beverly thought.

‘You’re not crazy,’ Georgie replied. ‘You need to get out of there though. I’ll explain later but you need to run.’

“I don’t understand,” Beverly said out loud.

‘RUN!’ the voice came with force. The huge pain in Beverly’s head hit again. It was like something was trapped in her skull, trying to get out, pushing with the weight of a thousand bricks. Again, the pain hit, and Georgie yelled ‘RUN, BEVERLY!’

Beverly cried out in pain and felt her body fly backward and hit the wall.

“BEVERLY!” Ben, Kay, and Richie all cried out at once and ran to her.

She groaned and sat up, slow. Her phone had fallen out of her pocket when she went flying and she could see that Maggie Tozier was calling. Her heart rate accelerated.

“We need to go!” she said, standing up, pushing away three pairs of hands trying to help her.

The others looked confused, but they followed her as she rushed to the door. She ran down the steps, not looking where she was going.

Maggie Tozier was gesturing to them in frantic motions to get to the car. Beverly saw him before the others did. Alvin Marsh was getting out of Al Shockley’s fancy BMW parked on the street and hurrying toward her. She understood in an instant that it had been a trick.

Alvin Marsh was friends with Al Shockley, a board member at Derry



Elementary and the person who had gotten him the cleaning job. Alvin Marsh had told his rich and well-connected buddy to keep an eye out for any of his daughters' friends' parents following him. He'd parked his car to trick Went Tozier into thinking he was at work. He'd then gotten a ride home with Mr. Shockley and now here he was, ready to surprise her in the middle of packing her underwear up. But he hadn't surprised her. How was that? Beverly didn't have time to wonder. She didn't have time to think at all.

"GO!" Beverly yelled, shoving the others.

Richie dove into the backseat after Ben and Beverly climbed into the front seat, dragging Kay with her by the wrist and slamming the door after her.

Maggie Tozier drove. She slammed on the gas just as Alvin had almost reached the car. She peeled out into the street and before any of them could breathe a sigh of relief Alvin Marsh had rushed in front of the car.

Beverly understood her dad's thought process just as she had understood about the trick on Went Tozier. Her dad thought if he jumped in front of the car Maggie would have no choice but to stop. In his arrogance and anger, he underestimated just how fast Maggie was driving and just how panicked she was. There was a sickening thud. Alvin Marsh's body went flying backward.

Beverly screamed. Kay had started crying in the cramped seat next to her. Ben and Richie were both shouting things that Beverly couldn't hear over her own frantic breathing. Maggie Tozier was saying something, but Beverly couldn't process it. She was making some kind of sound herself, between a sob and a scream. Beverly was locked in a panic so thick she couldn't think through it. The body on the road was still.

## 4. the kids aren't alright

“Is Beverly going to be alright?” asked Georgie Denbrough. The question was directed at Bill, who was sitting with his arms around his knees, looking exhausted.

Bill glanced at the others, helpless. They were all sitting in the Tozier’s living room, waiting to hear back from Maggie and Beverly. The six loser boys, Kay, Audra, and Georgie sat on the floor in a circle despite the furniture around them. Went had ordered a pizza.

Mike and Stan had been forced to abandon their meal at a nice restaurant about midway through when Richie sent the group chat about a million panicked messages. Mike leaned against the sofa, holding Stan’s hand. He was thinking about Beverly and all the emotions she was surely battling.

Ben, Kay and Richie all looked rattled, which made sense. The three of them had explained that they’d been in the car when the accident happened. Richie was leaning against Eddie who was rubbing his back in a methodic way, but Mike didn’t think Eddie looked too hot himself. His face was red and blotchy like he’d been crying, and Mike couldn’t figure that out. Eddie hadn’t been there for the accident, so what was wrong? Mike frowned at Eddie, who only shook his head, in a very subtle way. Mike gave him a small nod. He got the message. They’d talk about it later.

“She’ll be fine,” Stan said, because Bill was taking a minute to answer Georgie’s question. Mike squeezed Stan’s hand, and Stan shot him a soft look. Mike turned his eyes to Bill, who looked pale, and kept pursing his lips.

At first, based on Richie’s incoherent group chat messages, Mike and Stan had thought it was Beverly who was in the hospital and they had nearly died on the bike ride over to the Tozier place in total panic mode. Stan had started to snap at Richie for sending such confusing messages and Mike had been ready to grab Stan’s wrist and slow him down, but he hadn’t needed to. Stan had seen the look on Richie’s face and shut his mouth.

“Then why do you look so worried?” Georgie asked Stan.

“Because I’m always worried,” Stan said. “It’s a hallmark of my personality.”

“I can vouch for that,” Mike said with a tight laugh.

Georgie smiled a little. It was the first time Mike had seen the kid smile since he and Bill had arrived on bikes, out of breath. Bill explained that his parents were at the grocery store and he was supposed to be watching Georgie, but he’d come as soon as he saw Richie’s texts to the group. It was early in the day, Zack and Sharon wouldn’t care. And Georgie wanted to be there too. Mike could tell. The losers club had all started considering Georgie like family ever since That Summer, and Mike had a feeling Georgie felt the same about them.

“Shut up,” Stan said, elbowing Mike. In the soft way he said it, there were all kinds of feelings that weren’t meant for the others to hear or understand. Mike knew, though. He squeezed Stan’s hand again.

Later, there would be time for murmured ‘I’m sorrys,’ about their anniversary date being cut short. Later, there would be time for them to reconcile how scared they’d been when they thought Beverly was hurt. Later, they would go back to the Uris place and maybe have some tea and look over their homework. Now they were waiting. Waiting was the hard part.

Georgie frowned, looking unsure. The kid was sweet. It was intuitive, Mike thought, how Georgie was worried about Beverly and not her dad. He wondered if most kids would’ve been so quick to worry about someone other than the guy who’d been hit with a car. Georgie probably didn’t even know the word ‘empathy,’ Mike thought. Yet, he was more skilled in it than most adults.

“That was really scary for her,” Georgie said, as if reading Mike’s mind. Then he screwed up his face in a look of concentration that almost alarmed Mike. Bill seemed to feel the same way. He was looking at Georgie in a worried way. “It’s going to be ok, Beverly,” Georgie muttered.

Everyone was looking at Georgie now. Mike and Stan exchanged a brief look. It was a communicative look, saying that this was a phenomenon that required further discussion, but not here. Bill was staring at his brother with mingled worry and love.

“Georgie?” Bill asked.

“Yeah?” Georgie looked at Bill with wide eyes.

“Georgie, what w-were you doing?”

“Nothing,” Georgie said, looking away.

Mike didn’t think it was nothing, and he exchanged a look with Bill that told him Bill didn’t think so either. Bill didn’t stutter anymore. Much. Not since That Summer. Sometimes though, when he was freaked out enough, a stutter would slip into his voice like it had just then. Mike noticed Ben, Kay and Richie all exchanging looks too and made a mental note to ask them about that later.

“Hey guys,” Went Tozier entered the room carrying a large cardboard box.

The scent of pepperoni and cheese wafted over them, but it wasn’t especially enticing. It wasn’t just that Mike had just left a semi nice Italian restaurant to come here either. It was the deadness in the air. The worry that was tugging at all of them. Went set the pizza box on the floor in the middle of the room and disappeared for a moment before returning with a stack of paper plates and napkins which he passed out.

He sat on the floor next to Richie and asked, “Why are we all sitting on the floor?” Mike noticed that there was a hint of a joke in Went’s voice. He was trying to get them to see how silly they were, to lighten the mood.

“Dad,” Richie said in a tone of uncharacteristic seriousness.

“Alvin is going to pull through,” Went said.

The tension in the room didn’t change. Mike felt a chill down his spine. He knew what they were all thinking, and too afraid to say. ‘Is

that good news or bad news?’

Mike felt a little sick. He knew it was selfish, but he found himself thanking whatever powers were out there – after all that he’d experienced he didn’t quite know what to believe in but if there was evil there had to be good – that his daddy was such a kind and good man.

“Is he pressing charges against Mom?” Richie asked.

Oh shit. Mike hadn’t even thought about that. How could he have not thought about that? He kicked himself internally.

“No,” Went said. Everyone breathed a genuine sigh of relief now. “He thought about it. But Officer Nell came by. Let him know it was a pretty clear that he’d jumped in front of the car, and that he was the aggressor. Of course, he didn’t say it like that.”

“Argh, no he said aye mah good sir yeh best not be trying to settle no scores here or-”

“You sound like a pirate, dickwad,” Eddie interrupted Richie’s terrible Irish Cop voice, speaking up for the first time with a laugh. Mike didn’t think he sounded like himself though. The laugh was dry and quick instead of the screaming laughter Richie’s dumb voices usually got out of him. Eddie seemed to remember that Richie’s dad was there a second later and flushed. “Sorry,” he said to Went.

“I see the whole trying to impress the parents thing didn’t last long, Eddie,” Went Tozier said and everyone laughed at that, even Eddie, although he turned bright pink. “Is that that the way you talk to my son?”

“Aw, Richie your dad’s being protective,” Stan said. “Remind me to never let you forget this. Not as iconic as my dad saying ‘I want you to know that I uh, support you and stuff,’ but close!”

“Wait you came out to your dad?” Richie asked. “And that was his reaction? Amazing!”

“His mom responded by making us both mass amounts of breakfast,” Mike said with a grin.

"I can't believe you guys didn't immediately tell us about this," Richie said.

The front door opened then, and everyone turned. Maggie and Beverly came in, looking exhausted. Beverly gave them all a tired smile as everyone in the room ran over and enveloped her in a group hug.

Maggie and Bev joined the group on the floor, and each grabbed a slice of pizza.

"Daddy's gonna be fine," Beverly said. "Honestly the doctors said nothing was even broken. He got knocked unconscious, but they think the worst that'll happen is a concussion. They're keeping him overnight for observation."

"I guess the cat's out of the bag about where you're staying now though?" Richie asked.

Beverly gave him a sad look. "Yep. Mags really let him have it though, to be fair."

"Running the man over wasn't enough, babe?" Went asked his wife with an exhausted look.

"Beverly is exaggerating," Maggie said. "I just let him know, in a very polite way, that I did not approve of his parenting methods."

Beverly was grinning now, and Mike let out a soft laugh. "Wish I'd been there to hear that," he said.

"Same," Richie agreed. "How come you always decide to be cool and badass when I'm not around, Mom?"

"Because your father says you're in desperate need of role models with impulse control, dear," Maggie said. Everyone laughed as Richie huffed in protest.

Everyone hung around for a bit, eating pizza and chatting. Went and Maggie convinced Beverly that they'd take her to get her stuff another day, this time maybe with a police escort. Beverly wanted to get her stuff that night, while her dad was in the hospital, but Went

and Maggie were able to talk her down. Beverly said it was because she was tired of borrowing Richie's dirty pajamas, but Mike could tell there was more to it than that. He thought maybe she just wanted to get it over with. Or maybe she felt safer going there when her dad was in the hospital, being observed by a team of nurses and doctors and unable to leave.

It was a quiet afternoon, by their group's standards. They watched a few episodes of Brooklyn 99 on Hulu and played a game of Parcheesi. Mike noticed Richie and Eddie disappear for a while. At first, he just exchanged an amused look with Stan and laughed, but when they came back, they both looked upset. Mike knew it wasn't his business, but he found himself anxious. Something was off. Mike wasn't the nosy type, but he was the type to worry about his friends and he just wanted them to be happy.

After a while, Stan's mom called and told him to come home. Mike was surprised to see that it was already five o' clock. Mike gave Stan a quick kiss and promised to call him later. He wanted to stay for a bit longer. Soon though, Sharon Denbrough called, worried about Georgie as it was a school night, and Bill and Georgie left. Kay and Audra left together in Kay's mom's Mercedes. Ben's mom texted him shortly after that, and he took off as well.

"I guess my parents will be wondering where I am," Mike said. "I'm gonna head home as well."

"Eddie," Richie said, giving Eddie a pointed look. "Why don't you and Mike walk some of the way together?"

Eddie looked defeated and nodded. "Jeez," Mike said in a teasing voice. "You don't have to walk with me if you don't want to."

"I do," Eddie said. "Bye," he added to Richie and Bev. Eddie and Mike both gave Beverly tight hugs, and Eddie gave Richie a quick kiss before he and Mike left.

"Is everything ok?" Mike asked as they walked.

"Not really," Eddie admitted. "I kinda got in a huge fight with my mom earlier."

Mike's heart sank. "I'm sorry," he said.

Eddie wouldn't look at him. "Yeah," he said. "Thanks. She found out about my Instagram account."

"That doesn't seem so bad," Mike said, perking up. "She knows you use social media. I'm sure she'll get over your having one more account than she knew about."

"Mike," Eddie said, looking at Mike at last. Mike was alarmed to see that Eddie was starting to tear up. "My last post was the picture I showed you guys of me and Richie's initials on the kissing bridge."

"Oh!" Mike said. "Oh." He didn't know what to say, so he just stopped in the middle of the sidewalk and wrapped his arms around Eddie's shoulders. Eddie did start crying then, and Mike squeezed him tighter. They stood there for several minutes, in the middle of the sidewalk, hugging. Mike was relieved that no one else came walking by because he wouldn't have known what to do if they did.

At last, Eddie seemed to be all out of tears, and he pulled away, wiping his eyes. "Sorry," he said.

"It's ok," Mike said. "You don't have to apologize. And Eddie, if it's really bad, you can come home with me. Ask my dad if you can stay with us."

"That's what Richie wanted me to do," Eddie said, like he was admitting something terrible. "I just don't want to ask that of your parents. It's a lot to ask and-"

"It's not," Mike interrupted. "My parents love you. I don't see them turning you down long term, but even if they did, I'm sure you can stay tonight."

"Thanks," Eddie said.

"Of course," Mike said.

They walked in silence for a while. Then, Mike started asking questions about the Cadillac the two of them had been working on fixing up. He wanted to give Eddie a chance to talk about something



other than his mom, and to talk about something he was confident about. Besides, Mike actually did have a lot of questions. The car was close to getting up and running, and Mike pointed out that with Eddie staying at his house they were likely to get it running even sooner than they'd expected.

This seemed to cheer Eddie up significantly and he started talking about what needed to be done and using terms and car parts that Mike didn't know. Mike just nodded along. He was glad he'd gotten them off the topic of Eddie's mom. By the time they reached Mike's house, Eddie's mood had improved a lot.

They went inside together and entered the kitchen where Jessica Hanlon was standing at the stove stirring at a pan of veggies. Will Hanlon was sitting at the table, sipping a beer and looking at his phone. He looked up when Mike and Eddie came in.

"Hi boys," he said. "Mike, I didn't know we were expecting company. Eddie, we're happy you're here." That was something Mike's dad always did when Mike brought friends over. He told them he was happy to have them.

"Thanks," Eddie said. He looked nervous and upset again and Mike hurried to jump in.

"Mom, Dad, can we talk to you?" he asked. He sat down at the table across from his dad. Eddie didn't join him but instead stood in the doorway, looking awkward.

"What is it?" asked Will, putting down his phone and giving Mike his full attention. "Is everything ok?" Mike's mom had put down the spatula and turned around to pay attention as well.

"Not exactly," Mike said. "Dad, can Eddie stay with us for a while?"

"Eddie," Will said. "You know you're always welcome here."

"As long as you need," Jessica agreed. Mike gave both of his parents grateful looks. They were both well aware of the kind of things Sonia Kaspbrak considered parenting.

"Thank you," Eddie said. "You have no idea how much I appreciate

that.”

“Told ya,” Mike said.

“Dinner is almost ready,” Jessica said.

Mike and Eddie headed to Mike’s bedroom, and when they went in, Mike turned on the TV. He started tidying up. Eddie sat down on the bed and started typing on his phone, Mike assumed to let Richie who was surely freaking out know that he had a place to stay. Law and Order SVU was playing. After putting a few things away, Mike sat on the bed beside Eddie.

“Seriously,” Eddie said. “Thank you, Mike. You’re such a good friend.”

“Hey,” Mike said. “It’s not a big deal. We need to think about where you’re gonna stay though. We don’t have a guest room. If you don’t care we can just share the bed for now, but assuming this is gonna be long term we’ll want to get you your own bed. I mean, also we can maybe put up dividers or something if we decide we both want our own space. The room’s a little small for a second dresser, so I’m thinking I can just move my stuff around, and we can share the one I have but-” he stopped. Eddie was giving him a look. “What?” he asked.

“Nothing,” Eddie said, seeming to shake himself away from a thought. “I’m just thinking about how lucky I am to have a friend like you.”

“Ok, you sap,” Mike said with a laugh.

“No really,” Eddie insisted. “How many people would just give up their room, their bed, literally their dresser, everything – without even thinking? And you always do that. You’re always thinking about other people, never yourself. I just wanted you to know it means a lot.”

“Thanks,” Mike said, embarrassed. “I guess I never thought about it, but I always felt like I owed all of you guys?”

“Owed us?” Eddie asked with a frown. “What do you mean?”

“Maybe that’s poor wording,” Mike said. “I’ve just always felt like I had this role, you know? To protect the losers club.”

“We all feel that way,” Eddie said.

Mike hesitated. He’d never talked about this feeling he had, that it was his duty to give up whatever was necessary to protect the others, not even with Stan. He’d never even given it much thought himself. It was just there. An innate fact of the universe.

“It’s more that I feel like it’s my job,” Mike said. “To help make sure you guys are alright. I don’t know how to explain it.”

“Well, you know,” Eddie said. “You have to make sure you’re alright too. Like, caring about other people is good but you’ll be drained before you turn thirty if you never think about yourself.”

“Funny,” Mike said. “I had a similar conversation with Ben the other day. He thinks I should go to therapy.”

“He said that to you?” Eddie asked.

“Not in so many words,” Mike said. “But he seemed to think it would be a good idea. I think he might be right.”

“Maybe,” Eddie agreed. “Honestly, I’m sure we all need therapy.”

“Not even just to talk about the clown though,” Mike said. “Not like I could talk about that anyway, not without being sent to Juniper Hill with Henry Bowers. More to talk about everything. Like, sometimes I get this weird feeling. It’s like if I relax too much something bad is gonna happen. Like I need to be on guard all the time.”

“Like it’s not over,” Eddie said in a soft voice. He looked like he was thinking about saying something else but seemed to decide not to.

“Yeah!” Mike said.

Just then, Mike’s phone started buzzing. It was Beverly. He picked up. “Hey Bev,” he said. “Listen, good news, Eddie’s gonna stay with

me-”

“Mike,” Beverly interrupted. “I need you to tell Eddie to call nine-one-one. I’m going to give very specific instructions and I need you both to trust me.”

## 5. bad dreams

Bill and Bev sat together by the quarry, skipping rocks while Georgie watched. It was Monday afternoon. Bill was still trying to process all the events of the weekend, and now, it turned out, there was more he needed to understand.

“I wanna try,” Georgie said.

Bill placed a smooth rock in Georgie’s hand. “Here,” he said. “Now angle your wrist back like this.” He gently pulled Georgie’s hand back in the correct position. “And flick it forward.” Georgie did. The rock splashed into the water with a sad ‘plop’ and sunk. Georgie frowned. “That’s ok,” Bill said. “It takes practice.”

“Tell me m-more about the dream,” Bill said, meeting Beverly’s eyes for a moment.

With a look of concentration, Georgie flung another rock into the water. This time, it glided back over the surface before sinking beneath the surface. Georgie turned to Bill and Bev with wide blue eyes, grinning.

“Good job,” Beverly said.

“Bill, did I do good?” Georgie asked.

“Yeah,” Bill said, ruffling Georgie’s hair. “That was real g-good Georgie.” Bill could’ve sworn that an almost adult look of concern flashed across Georgie’s childish features when he stuttered, but it was gone before he could be sure.

“It wasn’t a dream,” Georgie said. He launched another rock. This one glided over the surface three times before sinking.

“Nice one,” Bill said. “What do you mean it wasn’t a dream?”

“It happened when I was awake,” Georgie said. “The other things, they’re just dreams. But Mrs. Kaspbrak...” he trailed off, looking away and staring off at the water.

"Richie and I were doing our math homework when it happened," Beverly said. "I was wide awake, trying to understand algebra. Mrs. Kaspbrak was the furthest thing from my mind. Then it was like, like-" it was Beverly's turn to stumble over her words, a rare feat for her.

"Like you were a ghost in her house," Georgie said.

"Yes!" Beverly said. "Exactly like that. I saw her, but I wasn't there. I was like a ghost. Only I could feel what she was feeling."

"Nausea," said Georgie with a sickened look. "And like I couldn't breathe."

"And then a squeezing-"

"Right here," Georgie finished, patting his own chest.

Bill looked back and forth between them, amazed. "I don't understand," he said, terribly afraid that he understood all too well. "How could you both have known? Or felt what she felt?"

'Because they were in the Deadlights,' he thought. 'You've known all along it couldn't be that easy to get Georgie away unharmed, haven't you?'

"Lucky my aunt taught me the symptoms of a female heart attack," Beverly said, shaking her head. "Or maybe...." She trailed off. The three of them avoided eye contact, feeling awkward.

It was clear what might have happened. If Beverly hadn't called Eddie and told him to call the ambulance and get home fast, Mrs. Kaspbrak would likely be rotting in her stuffy home right then. How long before someone found her? A day? A week? The thought of her rotting away like that gave Bill the creeps, but there was also something oddly satisfying about the idea.

"I'm not so sure I'd call that lucky," Bill muttered. Beverly and Georgie both looked at him in shock. Bill felt his face heat up. He hadn't meant to speak out loud. If it had just been Beverly there, maybe he would've said something to the same extent, but he didn't need Georgie to hear him expressing that kind of sentiment.

"Me either," Georgie said. 'Damn it,' he thought. 'Nice one, Bill. First, you let Georgie get trapped in the Deadlights, then you let him go years experiencing the aftermath and not talking about it and now you're teaching him to wish people dead. Great big brothering, really, A plus!'

"Georgie!" Bill said, partially to draw Georgie away from dark thoughts about letting people die, and partially to shut up the cruel voice in his own head.

"You can't exactly scold him for something you said first," Beverly snapped.

Bill rounded on her. "I didn't mean it," he said, even though he had meant it. "I didn't mean it," he said again, this time to Georgie.

"It's ok," Georgie said. He patted Bill on the arm. "I think you're right. I think maybe we shouldn't have said anything, and then things would be better."

"Georgie," Bill said. "How could it be better for a woman to be dead?"

"Maybe then Eddie wouldn't want to go back to her," Georgie said.

"He's not going back there!" Beverly cried, looking alarmed. "Is he?"

"Jessica and Will Hanlon are trying to talk him out of it," Georgie said. "I think they will. But he wants to."

"How do you kn-know all this?" Bill asked. He was afraid. He was afraid for Eddie about what would happen if he went back home after leaving, but that was a distant fear that he could hold at bay. In the moment, he was afraid of the things his little brother was stating so matter-of-factly.

"I don't know," Georgie said. He looked pale. Was he losing weight? Bill found himself making an internal promise to make sure the kid ate more. At their next family dinner, he'd slip Georgie some of his food. "I just know," Georgie said. Then he said, "I wish I had kept it to myself. I wish you'd kept it to yourself too, Beverly."

"That's an awful thing to say!" Bill cried, although it was the very thing he'd been thinking moments ago.

"Is it?" Beverly asked.

"Bev!" Bill said. "He's ten, come on."

"I'm sorry!" she said, kicking a pile of rocks into the water, not sounding sorry at all, only scared and upset. "But we were only eleven when we-"

"Oh so you think what we faced is a good standard to hold age appropriateness to?" Bill felt flushed and angry. He couldn't believe this. He hadn't meant to make the comment at all, and now Georgie was talking about wanting people dead and Beverly thought that just because the seven of them had faced unthinkable evil there should be no concern held for the ideas they exposed Georgie to?

"Bill," Beverly said. "Think about this for a second. What would've happened if Georgie hadn't warned me about my dad coming to the apartment when I was getting my stuff? Something wanted me to know he was coming."

"So what are you saying?" Bill asked. He felt exhausted. He didn't know what they wanted from him. What did they want him to say? What was he supposed to do here? "The thing that warned you about your dad must have wanted to help you. But you're saying – what? That the thing that warned you both about Mrs. Kaspbrak is evil?"

"I don't know," Beverly said with a frown. "Maybe it's just one thing. And maybe it's not good or evil. Maybe it just tells us things that are going to happen. Big things."

"And some things that don't happen," Georgie cut in. "Right?"

"Yeah," Beverly said, her voice softening. "Some things that don't happen." She hesitated. "Georgie, how long have you been seeing these things?"

"Since...." Georgie looked at Bill and Bill felt like a pile of bricks had just dropped from his heart to his stomach. "That summer," Georgie said. He sounded almost ashamed. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you Billy,



but I didn't want to worry you. And I wanted them to be just dreams. I really did."

"It's ok," Bill said. He wrapped his arms around Georgie and squeezed. "It's ok, Georgie. I'm glad you're telling me now." When he pulled away from the hug he turned to Beverly. "Have you also been having these dreams since?"

"The Deadlights," Beverly finished the sentence for him with a slow nod. "Except lately, they've been different."

"Louder," Georgie provided.

"Exactly," Beverly agreed. "And I've never had one when I was awake before."

"Me either," Georgie agreed.

They were both looking at Bill. They were waiting for some sort of leadership. They wanted him to have a plan. They wanted him to know what to say, to know what this meant. He felt a dull kind of panic set in. He just shook his head.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

sorry for the delay & for the short chapter - I've been swamped IRL. I do plan to post a kind of 'interlude' about Thanksgiving tomorrow that's fluffy & fun so yeah if I have time in the morning/early afternoon before it's time to start celebrating with my family, I will!

thank you for reading & please know every comment means so much to me <3

## 6. interlude: friendsgiving

### Notes for the Chapter:

I debated posting this as a separate fic but it's really part of this one it just doesn't contribute to the plot. I just wanted to post something cute for thanksgiving lol <3 enjoy me being emo & writing self-indulgent fluff

Richie was experiencing the rare phenomena of having no idea what to say.

He and Eddie had been laying on his bed in silence for about twenty minutes, which was a feat Richie would've guessed to be impossible for the two of them until it happened. He'd had a decent thanksgiving himself. He'd spent it with his parents, his grandparents on both sides, Beverly, and Beverly's aunt. It'd been nice. He and Bev had helped his mom make the mashed potatoes, and she'd let the two of them drink wine with her.

He was starting to get mad at himself for not putting his foot down and insisting that Eddie come over too, though. The thing is, he'd tried. The two of them had gotten into one of their biggest arguments over the matter the day before Thanksgiving, and Richie felt like things still weren't quite right. He hated it.

He hated Sonja Kaspbrak.

He'd tried to convince Eddie that just because his mom had had a stupid heart-attack didn't mean he needed to spend time with her. She was fine now, and besides, she could afford to hire an in-home nurse if she wanted. She chose not to, and it was very obvious to Richie that at least part of the reason was so she could manipulate Eddie into continuing to check up on her. Will and Jessica Hanlon had managed to convince Eddie to stay with them and not move back home, but it had not been easy, and Eddie had insisted on spending Thanksgiving with his mom.

He'd come over Friday morning looking upset and Richie had just

given him a hug and asked if everything was alright. Eddie had just said no and the of them had gone up to Richie's room. Now, Eddie was laying with his head on Richie's chest.

Richie was pretty sure if he had to stare at the ceiling in silence for another second, he was going to go insane.

"Do you want to talk about it?" he asked.

"Not really."

Right. Of course not. It was moments like this that Richie felt most inadequate. He didn't know how to talk about these things. He didn't know how to make it better.

"Alright," Richie said. "I get it. Your mom ate all the food and there wasn't enough left for you or anyone else. Well you are in luck, because we have enough leftovers to feed an army. There's a fifty-fifty shot the brownies are edibles since Bev made them but that just adds to the fun. Let's go get some, ok?"

"I'm not really hungry," Eddie said.

Richie sighed and rolled onto his side so that Eddie was forced to sit up a little and lean on his elbow, so they were facing each other.

"You know what I think we should do?" Richie said. "Friendsgiving. Us losers, Kay, Audra, and Georgie. We can all just bring leftovers from our family thanksgivings. We could do it this weekend. Or today, really."

"Yeah, that could be fun," Eddie admitted, the corner of his mouth hinting at a smile.

"I can tell from your enthusiasm what a good idea you think it is," Richie teased.

Now he finally got a smile. "Alright, it's the most brilliant idea ever. You're a genius. No one in the history of the world other than you has ever thought of Friendsgiving. You deserve a Nobel prize."

"I know I do," Richie said. "I'm kinda amazing."

“Yeah, kinda,” Eddie said with a soft smile, the sarcasm in his voice gone. He leaned in and kissed Richie and Richie thought, not for the first time, that he had no idea what he’d ever done to deserve Eddie.

The kiss was over much sooner than Richie would’ve liked. He leaned in and pulled Eddie in for a second kiss, hugging himself closer to Eddie.

“You’re the one who’s amazing,” Richie said against Eddie’s lips. “I mean it. I shouldn’t have been such a dick about Thanksgiving. I totally get why you felt like you had to spend it with your mom.”

“Don’t talk about my mom right now,” Eddie muttered.

“Shutting up,” Richie said with a laugh, leaning in for more kisses.

About an hour later, the two of them decided to text the group about the idea for a Friendsgiving.

Trashmouth: so I had a genius idea

Spaghetti: he had an idea that’s been had by 80% of the population before

‘Spaghetti’ changed his username to ItsEddie

ItsEddie: stop changing my username :/

MikeyWay: what’s the idea y’all

BigBill: what did I say about using the term ‘y’all’ smh

StanTheMan: I have to agree with Bill on that one. Sorry babe but no yee yees in the chat

MikyWay: can’t believe farm culture is being slandered in this chat. homophobia at it’s worst :/

BeverBitch: no one in this chat is a cishet mike u can’t claim homophobia

Trashmouth: what about @haystack

Haystack: been meaning to tell y'all something....

BigBill: BEN

StanThaMan: BENJAMIN

MikyWay: ahaha @haystack thank u king for supporting farmboy culture <3

ItsEddie: let the man speak he said he had to tell us something so shut up

Haystack: sooooooooo the whole 'man' thing. Not so much

Haystack: Been going to therapy and thinking through some stuff. I by 'they/them' now

BigBill: finally!!! another non cissy in the group <3

MikeyWay: <3

ItsEddie: <3

Trashmouth: <3

StanTheMan: <3

BeverBitch: <3 told y'all there were no cishets in the club

StanTheMan: wait so did you just out ben

Haystack: sksdkjaldjal no we're together rn she asked if she could say that lmao

BeverBitch: yeah damn stan who do you think I am

StanTheMan: I'm SORRY it's not that I think you'd do that I was just confused. Didn't know you guys were physically together right now

BeverBitch: It's ok stan I get it you think I'm a horrible person but it's FINE

StanTheMan: whatever bitch

BeverBitch: ilu2 stan

StanTheMan: <3

MikeyWay: is ben still a good name?? @haystack

Haystack: ily y'all

Haystack: & yes

MikeyWay loved Haystack's message

MikeyWay: y'all is a good term

Haystack: I like it because it's gender neutral & the idea of the lgbs appropriating redneck culture is funny

BigBill: ok fine that is actually kinda funny

StanTheMan: I actually never thought about it like that

BigBill: ok i guess y'all just became valid

Trashmouth: well now @haystack has stolen the thunder but do Y'ALL still wanna hear the idea

Haystack: sorry richie

Haystack: yes lmao

Trashmouth: @haystack lmao it's ok ily & I'm glad you told us

Trashmouth: the idea is to go black friday shopping as a group & get murdered over a discounted vacuum

ItsEddie: stfu richie no it's not

Trashmouth: it's not. we don't support capitalism in this chat.

ItsEddie: the idea is for us all to have a friendsgiving get together

Trashmouth: @BigBill invite audra & georgie

ItsEddie: @BeverBitch invite kay

BeverBitch: when do you guys wanna do it

Trashmouth: today???

Haystack: yess

Haystack: come over!

BeverBitch: bring leftovers <3

BigBill: oh yess

StanTheMan: heck yeah

MikeyWay: HELL yeah

Trashmouth: heckity yes

ItsEddie: fuck ye

Eddie closed the chat with a grin and turned his attention back to Richie. "Thanks."

"For what?" Richie asked.

"Putting up with my drama mostly. But also for this. For distracting me and planning this whole Friendsgiving thing."

"Maybe I just wanna hang out with our friends," Richie said. "Not everything is about you."

"Whatever," Eddie said. He leaned in and kissed Richie.

He thought, as he did, how glad he was that he could do that now. They'd been official since Halloween but it felt both like a lifetime and like no time at all had passed. They had jumped right in with 'I love yous' the day they admitted their feelings and came out to their friends and the couple thing had come easily to them for the most part. Yet, to Eddie who had been head over heels for Richie since they were eleven, and maybe even before that, every kiss felt like a shock. He couldn't believe he got to be with Richie in real life. Not a

fantasy, or a dream, but for real.

“What?” Richie asked.

Eddie must have been staring. “Nothing,” Eddie said.

“It’s something.”

Eddie laughed and pressed his face against Richie’s chest. “I’m sure you’ll laugh at me for this but I was thinking that thanksgiving is silly and honestly it’s got a messed up racist history, but I am so thankful for you.”

Richie made a soft sound that was suspiciously like an unironic ‘aw.’ Eddie grinned.

“That’s so fucking cute, babe,” Richie said. “I love you.”

“I love you.” Eddie hesitated. “And I’m sorry I’ve been so weird about the holiday.” He pulled his face away from Richie’s chest so he could look at him. “It’s just weird, you know? I’ve never spent a holiday without her. And she kept texting me about how she didn’t want to spend the day alone and how she missed me.”

Richie frowned and Eddie knew what he was thinking. ‘She doesn’t deserve to spend the day with you. And maybe, maybe if you were stronger she wouldn’t be able to manipulate you so easily. She’s just a manipulative bitch and even if she does really care she shows it in horrible toxic ways.’

No. He pushed those thoughts away because they weren’t fair to Richie, who would never think anything like that. He might be thinking that Sonja Kaspbrak was a bitch, or that she didn’t deserve to spend the day with Eddie, but the rest of it was Eddie’s own insecurities. He had to own up to them and stop pretending they were anything but that – personal insecurities.

“I know I suck for letting her guilt-trip me like that, I know it’s weak and-”

“I never said that,” Richie interrupted. “I just said that you shouldn’t let her get to you. It’s not weak.”



“It is,” Eddie said. “I admit it. I just start feeling bad, thinking about her in that house all alone.”

“I know,” Richie said. “And that’s what makes me so mad. You actually give a shit and empathize with her and she uses it against you. It’s bullshit.” He hesitated. Eddie gave him a second. It was rare that Richie hesitated before speaking and it meant he was trying to give the conversation proper care, which Eddie appreciated. “So how was it?”

It was Eddie’s turn to hesitate. He didn’t honestly know how to categorize the awkward thanksgiving dinner he’d had with his mom and his aunts. The thing is, it hadn’t been as bad as he’d been afraid it would be. She hadn’t told his aunts about him being gay, and she didn’t bring it up for which he was grateful. She didn’t bring up the argument they’d had about medicine either. Instead, she and her sisters had talked for a bit about how unfair the criticism Donald Trump got was, and then they’d moved to talking about the food. In short, it had been about like every other thanksgiving Eddie had ever had.

At the end, he’d just left and gone back to the Hanlon farm. Will and Jessica had saved him some food which he ate even though he was already full, and he and Mike went to the back porch after dinner. Mike had smoked and Eddie even took a hit himself.

“It wasn’t that bad,” he said to Richie.

“Then why didn’t you want to talk about it?”

“Because,” Eddie paused, trying to find the words. “It wasn’t that bad but that’s what makes this so hard. Sometimes it seems like I overreacted by moving out.”

“Eddie,” Richie said. It was a mark of the seriousness of the topic that Richie used his real name. “She drugged you and made you think you had illnesses you didn’t for years and said you were sick when she found out about you being gay. One day that’s not awful doesn’t mean you overreacted by getting the hell out of that situation. I’m just so scared you’re gonna go back to that, and I hate to think about it because I just love you and want you to be in a good place and the

Hanlons really love you and-”

“Richie,” Eddie interrupted because Richie was starting to do the thing that he sometimes did where he started talking faster and faster as his internal freakout mounted. “I’m not moving back in with my mom. You can relax, ok? I just can’t cut things off completely. I tried that and I can’t do it. I know I should be able to, but I can’t.”

“Hey, it’s ok,” Richie said. “You don’t have to. It’s complicated, I get that.”

Eddie kissed Richie and tried to put all the things he didn’t have words for into the kiss. Like how grateful he was that Richie understood, and how much he appreciated Richie listening.

“Alright, let’s go pig out on leftovers with our friends,” he said.

“Agreed,” Richie said.

They went downstairs and asked Went and Maggie if they could bring some of the leftovers from the day before to a get together for the losers and they were pretty obliging. Honestly, it seemed like they were relieved to get some of the food out of the fridge as it was pretty crowded in there.

As they gathered up the food and debated what to bring and what to leave, Eddie realized something. His mom was his blood, and maybe someday he would cut her off and maybe he wouldn’t but she wasn’t his family. Richie was his family. The losers club were his family. Kay and Audra and Georgie were his family. And the thought of this family that didn’t make him feel trapped or uncertain but instead filled him with warmth and love made it difficult to stop smiling.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

thank you for reading <3 I appreciate everyone who's commented, it makes me so happy & means so much. I hope you guys enjoy this soft fluffiness because the plot's about to take off (finally I know)

## 7. the meeting

### Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry for the delay, it's the end of the semester plus I'm working extra hours so things have been crazy IRL. I really appreciate everyone who is reading and commenting, you're all awesome <3

I hope you all enjoyed the Thanksgiving fluff because the plot is about to take off. There'll be more fluff I'm sure because it is ME we're talking about, but here we go with the serious stuff for now!

I put trigger warnings at the beginning of this fic but I wanted to put a chapter-specific warning for this chapter because it goes to a dark place.

Trigger warning: discussion of suicide and suicidal thoughts (A summary of the chapter will be in the end-notes if you'd like to skip this chapter but continue the fic)

“You’re telling me you both have dreams that come true and you've also been having repetitive dreams about all of us dying since we were in fourth grade and you decided to tell us NOW?”

Beverly and Georgie exchanged a look. Stan knew he sounded like a dick. He knew there was a higher than fifty percent chance he was being a dick. And he didn’t blame them for not saying anything, not really. He understood to an extent, why. But his heart was beating way too fast and he was starting to shake.

“They’re t-telling us n-now!” Bill said. Bill’s fists were clenched, and he looked pale. Stan could tell that Bill had been debriefed before the rest of them.

This official meeting of the losers club was taking place in their old clubhouse. It was a place where they had spent less and less time the older they all got. As they started wanting access to WiFi, an

underground hideout in the woods felt less appealing. They still came down and hotboxed or listened to music in the summer sometimes, but it was December now and they hadn't been down there in a few months but according to Beverly it 'seemed right to have the meeting here.' They sat in a circle now, rather than occupying the swing chair or the hammock, or any of the bean bags they'd put down there

"I didn't want to scare anyone," Georgie said in a quiet voice, looking at Stan.

Stan instantly regretted snapping and tried to take slow, even breaths. The terror was still there though. He could taste it. He'd read somewhere that fear was supposed to give you a metallic taste in the back of your throat, but to Stanley Uris, fear tasted like greywater and blood and grease-paint.

"I'm sorry," he managed to say to Georgie and Beverly, who both nodded.

"Why are you telling us now?" Mike asked.

"Because the dreams have been getting worse," Beverly said. "More real."

Stan met Beverly's eyes and felt as if someone had dropped ice down the back of his shirt. "There's more," he said to her. It wasn't a question. He knew it as surely as he knew every species of bird in Derry, or how to tell if his mom was worried about something, or when to call Mike and remind him that he loved him. But unlike those other certainties, this felt cold. The shivers he was starting to feel wrack his body had nothing to do with the December air.

"Yes," Beverly agreed. Her voice didn't shake but Stan could see the intensity in her eyes. It was the same look she'd given him when she told him about the blood in her bathroom the first day he'd been her friend. He hadn't doubted her then and he didn't now although every fiber of his being wanted to. "There's more."

"T-tell them," Bill said.

"I think if we don't do something, some of us are going to die."

“No,” Richie said. He’d been uncharacteristically quiet during the meeting so far and Stan was startled by the intensity in his voice. “No that’s not going to happen. It’s not an option.”

“I know that,” Beverly snapped. “Do you think I want anyone to die?”

“Well maybe if you don’t you shouldn’t say it’s going to happen!”

“She said we’re going to do something about it,” Ben said in a tone that was closer to sharp than Stan had ever heard from Ben before.

“Yes,” Beverly agreed. “I said if we don’t do something it will happen. Would you rather I kept this to myself?”

“Why do you think it’s going to happen anyway? We could just leave. All of us. We could get in that car Mike and Eddie fixed up and drive until we run out of gas or break down and then hitchhike. Who says we have to stay in Derry? Who says-”

“Richie,” Eddie said. He said it in a soft voice that Stan was not used to hearing from Eddie, who was nothing if not vocal. “Let her finish.”

Richie was quiet then, and Stan looked over at him and tried to communicate without words that he was scared too, but that they would be ok, that they were in this together. He wasn't sure of any of that, but he wanted to communicate to Richie anyway. Maybe Richie got it because he gave the slightest nod and turned to Beverly, expectant.

“I think we need to all decide what we want to do. Leaving Derry is an option, of course. But I think first you all need to know everything.”

“Me and Bev have been having shared visions,” Georgie said.

“What?” Ben asked. “What does that mean?”

“The dreams I told you all about,” Beverly said. “They’ve been happening while I’m awake. And Georgie has been having the same visions as me at the same time.”

“That’s impossible,” Stan said.

“More impossible than seven fourth-graders defeating an alien clown that lives in the sewers and feeds on children?” Bill asked.

Stan felt his chest tighten and his shaking increase. ‘I can’t do this,’ he thought, ‘I’m not as strong as the rest of them and I can’t do this, I can’t handle it.’

“Yeah about that,” Beverly said. “I’m not so sure he’s been uh, defeated.”

“No,” Stan said. “No he’s gone, he has to be.”

“Remember when Eddie’s mom had a heart attack?” Beverly asked.

“Oh my gosh,” Eddie said. “Was that a vision?”

“Yes,” Georgie said.

“Which means these shared visions are definitely real,” Beverly said.

“But you said you had other dreams that were real too, didn’t you?” Mike said. “Where you saw something small, like a special guest speaker coming to school, or a text from someone, and then it happened? But you also said not all of those things happened. Maybe whatever you’re afraid of won’t either. Maybe these visions are like the dreams. They’re just things that might happen, not things that will happen.”

Beverly and Georgie exchanged a look again. “The shared visions are way more intense than the dreams,” Beverly said. “I think we need to take steps to keep these things from happening.”

“Bev,” Eddie said. “You need to tell us what you guys saw in this shared vision.”

Beverly was starting to tear up. She swallowed hard and wiped away the tears that were threatening to fall down her cheeks. Ben reached across the circle and grabbed her hand and she looked grateful.

“I saw you die, Eddie,” she said. “Just like in the dream I told you about.” She looked at Stan next and he felt the tension boiling over. ‘I can’t do this, I can’t do this, I can’t do this,’ he thought again. The

words repeated again and again, a deafening mantra. “Stan,” she said. “I saw you kill yourself.”

“No,” Stan said. He stood up. He didn’t know what his plan was. He didn’t know where he could go or what he could do but he couldn’t stay in this clubhouse a second longer. “No, this is crazy, you can’t have seen that. And it won’t happen. What if I just say I won’t do it and leave it at that?”

Beverly stood up too. “Stan, we have to talk about this,” she said. Her voice broke and he wanted to break the distance and hug her but instead, he turned around and dashed up the ladder.

Seconds after he’d pushed open the trap door and stood in the barrens, which really were barren now that winter was upon them and everything was dead, the trap door opened again. Beverly came crashing out followed by the other losers.

Stan just walked away. He didn’t run, although part of him wanted to. Instead, he walked in the direction of the road at a brisk pace.

“Wait,” Mike said, jogging up to him. “Stan, let’s just talk about this.”

“Stanley,” Eddie called. “We have to talk about a plan to stop this.”

Stan whipped around. “WE don’t have to do anything,” he said. “You’re all crazy. You’re talking about visions and – and – things that you’re convinced will happen even though they won’t. I wouldn’t do that, ok? So just leave me alone. I can’t listen to this anymore.”

“Stan,” Bill said. “Please.”

“Just leave me alone,” he snapped. With that, he stormed away.

He didn’t hear the crackle of breaking twigs and dead leaves behind him. ‘They know you can’t handle this and they’re glad you’re leaving,’ whispered a cruel voice in his head. ‘You’re the crazy one. The weak one. The weakest link. They don’t have time for your bullshit Stanley and they’re better without you. Stronger without you.’

Another thought, one that chilled Stan’s blood, came uninvited but

much calmer and more intent than the other, panicked thoughts racing through his mind. 'Maybe Beverly's not as wrong as you'd like to think. Maybe you will do it.'

"I WON'T," Stanley said out loud to the empty woods. A crow that had been perched on a barren tree nearby cawed and flew off. Stan glanced around to make sure no one else was nearby. Then they'd definitely think he was the crazy one, yelling random retorts to an invisible rival.

Except, he'd always been his own rival, hadn't he? Always making things harder than they needed to be. That Summer, he'd always been more afraid than the rest of them. He'd been the one who almost couldn't make it. Back then, the others had convinced him that he was stronger and braver than he believed. Now he was starting to think all he'd ever done was hold them back.

Maybe he couldn't cut it after all.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

If you skipped the chapter basically the losers have a meeting in the clubhouse and Beverly and Georgie give them the scoop about their dreams and visions. They explain that they have had some shared visions about Pennywise returning and about Eddie being killed, like in the dream Beverly told Richie and Eddie about (also like in the book/movie). They also said that they had a shared vision about Stan killing himself at which point Stan has a panic attack and leaves, upset and scared.